



# Another April

*by Jesse Stuart*

*It's finally spring. Grandpa is free to go outdoors. As he enjoys some of his favorite things, discover what matters to his family.*

### **Connect to Your Life**

Do you know an elderly person whose health is failing? Do you know how to act toward this person? What feelings have you had when you've been around someone very old? Discuss your feelings with classmates.

### **Key to the Story**

In this short story, the narrator tells about a grandfather who is very old. Grandpa is being watched by his daughter and grandson. Watch for the ways these three family members treat one another.

### **Vocabulary Preview**

#### **Words to Know**

coarse	bundled
timber	terrapin



**Reading Coach CD-ROM selection**

**FOCUS**

Grandpa is eager to get outdoors again. Read to find out what he wants to do.

"Now, Pap, you won't get cold," Mom said as she put a heavy wool cap over his head.

"Huh, what did ye say?" Grandpa asked, holding his big hand cupped over his ear to catch the sound.

"Wait until I get your gloves," Mom said, hollering real loud in Grandpa's ear. Mom had forgotten about his gloves until he raised his big bare hand above his ear to catch the sound of Mom's voice.

"Don't get 'em," Grandpa said, "I won't ketch cold."

10 Mom didn't pay any attention to what Grandpa said. She went on to get the gloves anyway. Grandpa turned toward me. He saw that I was looking at him.

"Yer Ma's a-puttin' enough clothes on me to kill a man," Grandpa said; then he laughed a

coarse laugh like March wind among the pine tops at his own words. I started laughing but not at Grandpa's words. He thought I was laughing at them and we both laughed together. It pleased

20 Grandpa to think that I had laughed with him over

**coarse**

(kôrs)

adj. rough

something funny that he had said. But I was laughing at the way he was dressed. He looked like a picture of Santa Claus. But Grandpa's cheeks were not cherry-red like Santa Claus's cheeks. They were covered with white thin beard—and above his eyes were long white eyebrows almost as white as percoon petals and very much longer.

**REREAD**

Is the grandson laughing with or at Grandpa?

30 Grandpa was wearing a heavy wool suit that hung loosely about his big body but fitted him tightly round the waist where he was as big and as round as a flour barrel. His pant legs were as big 'round his pipestem legs as emptied meal sacks. And his big shoes, with his heavy wool socks dropping down over their tops, looked like sled runners. Grandpa wore a heavy wool shirt and over his wool shirt he wore a heavy wool sweater and then his coat over the  
40 top of all this. Over his coat he wore a heavy overcoat and about his neck he wore a wool scarf.

**pipestem**  
(pīp' stēm')  
thin, like the thin end of a pipe

The way Mom had dressed Grandpa you'd think there was a heavy snow on the ground but there wasn't. April was here instead, and the sun was shining on the green hills where the wild plums and the wild crab apples were in bloom enough to make you think there were big snowdrifts sprinkled over the green hills. When I looked at Grandpa and then looked out at the window at the sunshine and the green grass, I laughed  
50 more. Grandpa laughed with me.

"I'm a-goin' to see my old friend," Grandpa said just as Mom came down the stairs with his gloves.

"Who is he, Grandpa?" I asked, but Grandpa just looked at my mouth working. He didn't know what I was saying. And he hated to ask me the second time.

60 Mom put the big wool gloves on Grandpa's hands. He stood there just like I had to do years ago, and let Mom put his gloves on. If Mom didn't get his fingers back in the glove-fingers exactly right, Grandpa quarreled at Mom. And when Mom fixed his fingers exactly right in his gloves the way he wanted them, Grandpa was pleased.

**REREAD**

Describe how you think Mom is treating Grandpa.

"I'll be a-goin' to see 'im," Grandpa said to Mom. "I know he'll still be there."

**THINK IT THROUGH**

Where is Grandpa going? Why does getting ready take so long?

**FOCUS**

Read to discover why Mom is so careful about Grandpa.

70 Mom opened our front door for Grandpa and he stepped out slowly, supporting himself with his big cane in one hand. With the other hand he held to the door **facing**. Mom let him out of the house just like she used to let me out in the spring. And when Grandpa left the house, I wanted to go with him, but Mom wouldn't let me go. I wondered if he would get away from the house—get out of Mom's sight—and pull off his shoes and go barefooted and wade the creeks like I used to do when Mom let me out. Since Mom wouldn't let me go with Grandpa, I watched him as he walked slowly down the path in front of our house. Mom stood there watching Grandpa too. I think she was 80 afraid that he would fall. But Mom was fooled;

**facing**  
frame

Grandpa toddled along the path better than my baby brother could.

“He used to be a powerful man,” Mom said more to herself than she did to me. “He was a **timber** cutter. No man could cut more timber than my father; no man in the timber woods could sink an ax deeper into a log than my father. And no man could lift the end of a bigger saw log  
90 than Pop could.”

**timber**  
(tĭm' bər)  
*n.* tree

**REREAD**

How does this description of Grandpa compare to how he is now?

“Who is Grandpa goin’ to see, Mom?”

I asked.

“He’s not goin’ to see anybody,” Mom said.

“I heard ’im say that he was goin’ to see an old friend,” I told her.

“Oh, he was just a-talkin’,” Mom said.

I watched Grandpa stop under the pine tree in our front yard. He set his cane against the pine tree trunk, pulled off his gloves and put them in his pocket. Then  
100 Grandpa stooped over slowly, as slowly as the wind bends down a sapling, and picked up a pine cone in his big soft fingers. Grandpa stood fondling the pine cone in his hand. Then, one by one, he pulled the little chips from the pine cone—tearing it to pieces like he was hunting for something in it—and after he had torn it to pieces he threw the pine-cone stem on the ground.

**bough**  
(bou)  
tree branch

Then he pulled pine needles from a low-hanging pine **bough**, and  
110 he felt of each pine needle between his fingers.

He played with them a long time before he started down the path.

“What’s Grandpa doin’?” I asked Mom.

But Mom didn’t answer me.

“How long has Grandpa been with us?” I asked Mom.

“Before you’s born,” she said. “Pap has been with us eleven years. He was eighty when he quit cuttin’  
120 timber and farmin’; now he’s ninety-one.”

I had heard her say that when she was a girl he’d walk out on the snow and ice barefooted and carry wood in the house and put it on the fire. He had shoes but he wouldn’t bother to put them on. And I heard her say that he would cut timber on the coldest days without socks on his feet but with his feet stuck down in cold brogan shoes, and he worked stripped above the waist so his arms would have freedom

**REREAD**

Why do you think Mom shared these memories about Grandpa?

130 when he swung his double-bitted ax. I had heard her tell how he’d sweat and how the sweat in his beard would be icicles by the time he got home from work on the cold winter days. Now Mom wouldn’t let him get out of the house, for she wanted him to live a long time.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

How does Mom feel about the changes in her father?

**FOCUS**

Grandpa’s walk continues. Read to find out a change the narrator notices about his grandfather.

As I watched Grandpa go down the path toward the hog pen, he stopped to examine every little thing

along his path. Once he  
waved his cane at a  
140 butterfly as it zigzagged over  
his head, its polka-dot wings  
fanning the blue April air.  
Grandpa would stand when a  
puff of wind came along, and hold his face  
against the wind and let the wind play with his white  
whiskers. I thought maybe his face was hot under his  
beard and he was letting the wind cool his face. When  
he reached the hog pen, he called the hogs down to  
the fence. They came running and grunting to  
150 Grandpa just like they were talking to him. I knew  
that Grandpa couldn't hear them trying to talk to  
him, but he could see their mouths working and he  
knew they were trying to say something. He leaned  
his cane against the hog pen, reached over the fence,  
and patted the hogs' heads. Grandpa  
didn't miss patting one of our seven  
hogs.

**REREAD**

Picture this scene  
in your mind.

As he toddled up the little path  
alongside the hog pen, he stopped under a blooming  
160 dogwood. He pulled a white blossom from a bough  
that swayed over the path above his head,  
and he leaned his big **bundled** body against  
the dogwood while he tore each petal from  
the blossom and examined it carefully. There  
wasn't anything his dim blue eyes missed. He  
stopped under a redbud tree before he reached the  
garden to break a tiny spray of redbud blossoms. He  
took each blossom from the spray and examined it  
carefully.

**bundled**

(bŭn' dld)  
adj. wrapped up



170 “Gee, it’s funny to watch  
Grandpa,” I said to Mom; then I  
laughed.

“Poor Pap,” Mom said. “He’s  
seen a lot of Aprils come and go.  
He’s seen more Aprils than he will  
ever see again.”

I don’t think Grandpa missed a thing on the little  
circle he took before he reached the house. He played  
with a bumblebee that was bending a windflower  
180 blossom that grew near our corncrib beside a big  
bluff. But Grandpa didn’t try to catch the bumblebee  
in his big bare hand. I wondered if he would and if  
the bumblebee would sting him, and if he would  
holler. Grandpa even pulled a butterfly cocoon from a  
blackberry briar that grew beside his path. I saw him  
try to tear it into shreds but he couldn’t. There wasn’t  
any butterfly in it, for I’d seen it before. I wondered if  
the butterfly with the polka-dot wings, that Grandpa  
waved his cane at when he first left the house, had

190 come from this cocoon. I laughed when Grandpa  
couldn’t tear the cocoon apart.

“I’ll bet I can tear that cocoon apart for Grandpa if  
you’d let me go help him,” I said to  
Mom.

“You leave your Grandpa alone,”  
Mom said. “Let ’im enjoy April.”

**REREAD**

Why doesn’t the  
boy seem to take  
Grandpa’s walk  
seriously?

Then I knew that this was the first time  
Mom had let Grandpa out of the house all winter. I  
knew that Grandpa loved the sunshine and the fresh  
200 April air that blew from the redbud and dogwood  
blossoms. He loved the bumblebees, the hogs, the  
pine cones, and pine needles. Grandpa didn’t miss a  
thing along his walk. And every day from now on

until just before frost Grandpa would take this little walk. He'd stop along and look at everything as he had done summers before. But each year he didn't take as long a walk as he had taken the year before. Now this spring he didn't go down to the lower end of the hog pen as he had done last year. And when I  
210 could first remember Grandpa going on his walks, he used to go out of sight. He'd go all over the farm. And he'd come to the house and take me on his knee and tell me about all what he had seen. Now Grandpa wasn't getting out of sight. I could see him from the window along all of his walk.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

How is the grandson's view of Grandpa changing as he watches him and listens to Mom?

**FOCUS**

Find out whom Grandpa finally meets.

Grandpa didn't come back into the house at the front door. He toddled around back of the house toward the smokehouse, and I ran through the living room to the dining room so I could  
220 look out the window and watch him.

**smokehouse**  
place where  
meat is kept

"Where's Grandpa goin'?" I asked Mom.

"Now never mind," Mom said. "Leave Grandpa alone. Don't go out there and disturb him."

"I won't bother 'im, Mom," I said. "I just want to watch 'im."

"All right," Mom said.

**REREAD**

Do you believe the boy is taking Grandpa's walk more seriously now? Explain.

But Mom wanted to be sure that I didn't bother him so she followed me into the dining room. Maybe  
230 she wanted to see what Grandpa was going to do. She stood by the window, and we watched Grandpa as he walked down beside our smokehouse where a tall sassafras tree's thin leaves fluttered in the blue April wind. Above the smokehouse and the tall sassafras was a blue April sky—so high you couldn't see the sky-roof. It was just blue space and little white clouds floated upon this blue.

When Grandpa reached the smokehouse he leaned his cane against the sassafras tree. He let himself  
240 down slowly to his knees as he looked carefully at the ground. Grandpa was looking at something and I wondered what it was. I just didn't think or I would have known.

"There you are, my good old friend," Grandpa said.

"Who is his friend, Mom?" I asked.

Mom didn't say anything. Then I saw.

"He's playin' with that old terrapin, Mom," I said.

**terrapin**

(tĕr' ə pĭn)

*n.* turtle

"I know he is," Mom said.

250 "The terrapin doesn't mind if Grandpa strokes his head with his hand," I said.

"I know it," Mom said.

"But the old terrapin won't let me do it," I said.

"Why does he let Grandpa?"

"The terrapin knows your Grandpa."

"He ought to know me," I said, "but when I try to stroke his head with my hand, he closes up in his shell."

Mom didn't say anything. She stood by the window watching Grandpa and listening to Grandpa talk to  
260 the terrapin.

"My old friend, how do you like the sunshine?"

Grandpa asked the terrapin.

The terrapin turned his fleshless face to one side like a hen does when she looks at you in the sunlight. He was trying to talk to Grandpa; maybe the terrapin could understand what Grandpa was saying.

"Old fellow, it's been a hard winter,"

Grandpa said. "How have you fared under the smokehouse floor?"

<b>fared</b> (fârd) been doing
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270 "Does the terrapin know what Grandpa is sayin'?" I asked Mom.

"I don't know," she said.

"I'm awfully glad to see you, old fellow," Grandpa said.

He didn't offer to bite Grandpa's big soft hand as he stroked his head.

"Looks like the terrapin would bite Grandpa," I said.

"That terrapin has spent the winters under that smokehouse for fifteen years," Mom said. "Pap has  
280 been acquainted with him for eleven years. He's been talkin' to that terrapin every spring."

“How does Grandpa know the terrapin is old?” I asked Mom.

“It’s got 1847 cut on its shell,” Mom said. “We know he’s ninety-five years old. He’s older than that. We don’t know how old he was when that date was cut on his back.”

“Who cut 1847 on his back, Mom?”

“I don’t know, child,” she said, “but I’d say  
290 whoever cut that date on his back has long been  
under the ground.”

**THINK IT THROUGH**

In what way does the terrapin respond to Grandpa? How is it different from the way it has behaved with the boy?

**FOCUS**

As you read, notice all the things the terrapin makes the boy think about.

Then I wondered how a terrapin could get that old and what kind of a looking person he was who cut the date on the terrapin’s back. I wondered where it happened—if it happened near where our house stood. I wondered who lived here on this land then, what kind of a house they lived in, and if they had a sassafras with tiny thin April leaves on its top growing in their yard, and if the person that cut that  
300 date on the terrapin’s back was buried at Plum Grove, if he had farmed these hills where we lived today and cut timber like Grandpa had—and if he had seen the Apriks pass like Grandpa had seen them and if he enjoyed them like Grandpa was enjoying this April. I wondered if he had looked at the dogwood blossoms, the redbud blossoms, and talked to this same terrapin.

"Are you well, old fellow?" Grandpa asked the terrapin.

The terrapin just looked at Grandpa.

310 "I'm well as common for a man of my age," Grandpa said.

"Did the terrapin ask Grandpa if he was well?" I asked Mom.

"I don't know," Mom said. "I can't talk to a terrapin."

"But Grandpa can."

"Yes."

"Wait until tomatoes get ripe and we'll go to the garden together," Grandpa said.

320 "Does the terrapin eat tomatoes?" I asked Mom.

"Yes, that terrapin has been eatin' tomatoes from our garden for fifteen years," Mom said. "When Mick was tossin' the terrapins out of the tomato patch, he picked up this one and found the date cut on his back. He put him back in the patch and told him to help himself. He lives from our garden every year. We don't bother him and don't allow anybody else to bother him. He spends his winters under our smokehouse floor buried in the dry ground."

330 "Gee, Grandpa looks like the terrapin," I said.

Mom didn't say anything; tears came to her eyes. She wiped them from her eyes with the corner of her apron.

**REREAD**

Why does Mom cry?

"I'll be back to see you," Grandpa said. "I'm a-gettin' a little chilly; I'll be gettin' back to the house."

340 The terrapin twisted his wrinkled neck without moving his big body, poking his head deeper into the April wind as Grandpa pulled his bundled body up by holding to the sassafras tree trunk.

“Good-by, old friend!”

The terrapin poked his head deeper into the wind, holding one eye on Grandpa, for I could see his eye shining in the sinking sunlight.

Grandpa got his cane that was leaned against the sassafras tree trunk and hobbled slowly toward the house. The terrapin looked at him with first one eye and then the other.

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**THINK IT THROUGH**

1. What is the terrapin doing as Grandpa leaves?
2. Grandpa calls the terrapin his “old friend.” What do you think he and the terrapin have in common?
3. Has the boy’s attitude toward his grandfather changed? Support your opinion with examples.